

## PROLOGUE

Contemporary research on history of the 'Region' and history of the 'People' of the Region to understand microscopic specificity in a greater macro perspective has attracted the attention of the researchers of history in particular and social-science analysts in general. One of such areas is History of the urban spaces of the South-East Asian Nations, who have experienced the rule or governance of imperialism for over centuries. Admittedly any attempt of writing urban History of any specific urban area/town would tend to concentrate primarily on the nature of changes that hegemonic colonial power brought about in pre-colonial social formation or urban formation, if any.

Contemporary scholars of Indian urban history have informed us about the colonial origins of most of the important Indian cities. It is also known how major cities like Delhi, Madras, Lucknow underwent significant morphological transformations throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is also known how the advent of colonial rule had replaced pre-colonial urban centers by the rise of colonial urban centers, based on administrative services, navigation, and railway communication. Thus the colonial administrative towns, port cities, railway towns, hospitable summer urban hill stations had started evolving since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The principal concern of this intellectual venture has been to understand the specific details of the society, economy and polity of urban Darjeeling by exploring both the Historiography and Historicity of this important urban hill station. The proposed study has been conceived as 'National Urban History Localized', the implication is that, a student of history can well identify a locality as a smaller canvas to examine the broader trends in National History. Post-modernist historians may have disagreement on this pre-occupied notion of the so-called Nationalist History. In their view an urban locality can be studied on its own terms with a focus on the rise, growth and decay of the communities of the locality based on local conditions. One can well accept the approach to study the urban history of Darjeeling through phases with reference to its' society, economy and polity. While accepting this approach to study local urban history, one must not ignore the mega narratives of Nationalist Urban History to establish the linkages in the areas of fusion stemming out of forces and factors ideas and events affecting local historical conditions. Thus, instead of assuming that the principal subject matter of local history is the inexorable process of urbanization, it may be useful to think of the possibility of a continuous rise and fall of urban communities. An individual urban center might as well go through similar historical experiences, rising at one point, going through a process of decline at another and re-emerging again as a major urban formation. This suggests the

possibility of a new kind of urban history touching on what we may term as a search for identifying both the urban history of the region and urban history of the people of the region. This morphographic politico-economic approach dovetailed with culturo-ethnographic approach to study urban history of Darjeeling has been suggested for.

To adumbrate, almost all hill stations of colonial India received a kind of urban formation for they functioned as sanctuaries for the colonial rulers and enclaves of British culture in the mountains of the sub continent. Dane Kennedy charts the symbolic and sociopolitical functions of the hill stations during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, arguing that to the British in India these centres were much more than mere pleasure spots. Particularly after the revolt of 1857, they became political and military head quarters and cantonments for colonial troops, in addition, they were centers of local and regional development that provided employment for countless Indians who often travelled great distances to work in the hill stations as servants, merchants and clerks.

The British acquired the territorial areas of Darjeeling from Sikkim. In the Anglo-Nepal war of 1817 the East India Company wrested away the territory of Darjeeling from Nepal and restored it to Sikkim<sup>(1)</sup>. By 1835 however the territory of Darjeeling (including hills and Terai plains) had come under the control of the East India Company.<sup>(2)</sup> Municipal institutions in Darjeeling were first developed

with the establishment of Darjeeling Municipality in 1857.<sup>(3)</sup> Thus, Darjeeling underwent a municipal civic formation since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to the passage of Councils Acts, 1861 Darjeeling remained under non-regulation scheme. The Act. No. XV of 1874 declared Darjeeling as a scheduled District granting a special status along with other four districts of Bengal. The Districts were kept outside the ambit of general laws in operation throughout the rest of India. The Government of India Act of 1891 had replaced the term Scheduled District by a new terminology "Back ward Tract".<sup>(4)</sup> By way of these new arrangements the Governor of Bengal was vested with the responsibility of administering Darjeeling and to determine whether any law of provincial legislature would be given effect in the district.

The Government of India Act 1935<sup>(5)</sup> brought in its wake significant changes in the administrative system and substituted the 'backward tract' by 'excluded' and partially excluded areas with the intend to provide a special status for certain considerations,

- a) presentation of indigenous system of land tenures;
- b) necessity of entrusting undivided responsibility of the District Officers;

Formulation of simple laws in conformity with native institutions and simplicity of local people.

With the dawn of independence Darjeeling underwent politico-administrative metamorphosis. Shedding off its' status of partially excluded area, Darjeeling became a district of the state of West Bengal and since then Darjeeling District had always been kept under the overall jurisdiction of Bengal since 1912.<sup>(6)</sup>

Thus, Darjeeling underwent rapid transformation ever since 1835. From a sparsely populated small piece of land inhabited by not more than a few hundred indigenous tribes, Darjeeling became a fast growing urban area at the mountaintop of the Himalayas over the passage of time. With the coming of British people in the Darjeeling Hills, the beginning of the tea plantation industries, the establishment of schools and colleges by the Missionaries, the development of tourism, Sanitariums and resorts of land lords and business magnets coming from the plains and development of trade and commerce, this tiny hinterland started getting an urban formation.<sup>(7)</sup> The military cantonments, the roads and railways linkages, development of entrepreneurships and establishment of municipality in Darjeeling had accelerated the space of urban growth. All these changes did have a significant impact on the urban history, polity, society, economy and culture of the "Queen of the Himalayas".

### **Literature Review**

Literature on urban history of Darjeeling has been scarce. Infact, attempts at writing urban history in India have not been even

a well-conceived exercise through ages. Much of what Ali Ashraf wrote about the paucity of social science research in this area during the 1960's applies to the following decades also.<sup>(8)</sup> A few bibliographical works on urbanization was done in the decade of the 1970's. For instance, (i) Ashish Bose, *Urbanization in India: An Inventory of Source Materials*, Bombay: Academic Books, 1970; (ii) Stanley D. Brunn, *Urbanization in Developing countries; An International Bibliography*, E. Lansing: Latin American Studies Centre, Michigan University, 1971; (iii) Ashis Bose, *Bibliography of Urbanization in India, 1947-76*, New Delhi; Tata-Mcgraw Hill, 1976; (iv) John Van Willigen, *The Indian City: A bibliographic Guide to the Literature on Urban India*, New Haven: Human Relations Area Files 1978.

The study of urban centers had been discussed since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by celebrated scholars like Sir Henry Maine (1885) L.H. Morgan (1877), F. Tonnies (1957) Durkheim (1864) Fustel de Coulanges famous work on ancient cities (1880) Weber's essays on cities (1921) and Henri Pirenne (1946) who focused his studies on the growth of medieval Indian cities.

Even the European Travellers who visited India, as Crane has pointed out, found numerous and vibrant Indian Cities. Travellers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries felt that India's urbanization was unsurpassed by the western world at that time. They recorded

that many of the cities such as Agra, Fatehpur, Calicut, Vijaynagar, Bidar and Surat were much bigger than London at that time.

Three basic features of the Indian cities were identified by Robert I Crane. These are : (a) Many of them were primarily administrative centres. Once it was decided as a capital, it would soon be thronged by bureaucrats and military top-ups, priests and nobles as well as a sizeable consuming community. Such cities usually declined with the fall of the dynasty or shifting of the capital. (b) Many Indian cities were primarily handicraft centres and with disturbance in trade routes or domestic instability, they dwindled; (c) Many of the cities had thriving trade emporiums and ultimately, declined with the coming of the Europeans. Apart from these cities, there had been certain cities which were centres of learning such as Varanasi or Nalanda.<sup>(9)</sup>

As against those, major modern cities of the colonial period were the creations of European effort or enterprise. Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were created by Europeans. In view of this Crane talked about "two urbanism".<sup>(10)</sup>

Childe's studies of the urban revolution (1947, 1950, and 1954) are important as they deal with the relationship between civilization and urban centers. His study focuses on one important aspect, that primarily the growth of urban centers is dependent on the surplus created out of food production or agriculture. His works contained a strong element of environmental determination, modes of

production, political religious and social institution leading to “urban revolution.”<sup>(11)</sup> (Childe 1950 “The Urban Revolution”)

Childe’s approach was further analyzed by Robert Redfield<sup>(12)</sup> where he tried to trace the difference between rural and urban societies. Redfield mentioned that rural societies were isolated, illiterate having a strong sense of family bonding unity, little division of labour, common experiences and rigid ways of solving problems. The cities were opposite. Thus, primary urbanization transformed “little tradition” into “great traditions” expanding thereby the normative zone for territorial integration by way of universalizing cultural consciousness.

In the 1950(s) the notion of the city as the cradle of civilization became the central focus of the Chicago Symposium on the “City Invincible”. Scholars like Lewis Mumford adopted a revolutionary approach towards urbanization where the notion was removed that the form and content of the city must primarily serve its technology and support its expanding economy. This assumption turned the true order upside down. The primary function of the city today was that of bringing technology itself into line with human purpose reducing speed, energy and qualification to amounts that are humanly assailable and humanly valuable.<sup>(13)</sup>

The early evolutionist view presented by Gordon Childe, was further questioned by latter generation scholars. With archaeological excavations coming into the fore-front, catastrophic climatic changes

being the main catalyst of the Neolithic revolution was rejected and it was argued that food-producing economy was the outcome of increasing differentiation and specialization in human society, and development of food production lead to a straight forward programme from hunting to gathering to sedentariness and agriculture. The earliest disproof of Childe's theory resulted from the excavation of the most ancient of all urban settlements Jericho and Catal Huyuk, dated to a far earlier period than the urban revolution. It appeared that Jericho's inhabitants had hardly begun to domesticate grains, yet they had the civic organization that enabled them to construct massive defense walls.<sup>(14)</sup> In consequence, alternative theories of primary urbanization began to evolve. According to these theories, urban settlements need not have to develop out of villages. Right from the beginning there can be established cities growing side by side next to rural settlements. Demographic pressure rather than agriculture was thought to be the key factor in the emergence of cities (Prinford - 1968). This pressure, it is claimed, disturbed the balance between population and resources, causing some people to move to marginal areas. Finding them in a region where agricultural conditions were unfavourable, these people either had to devise new techniques of food production and storage or had to establish a new form of economy based on services such as trade religion or defence. This pressure brought to bear by an expanding population and the

resulting in a new type of economy necessitated a concentration of the population and led to the emergence of urban settlements.<sup>(15)</sup>

In the 1970's, a number of studies in the history of urbanization in India have been done. For instance, Barnow and Shodhan<sup>(16)</sup> have examined incisively the process of urbanization during different periods in Indian history like the Indus Valley Civilization, Ganges Valley, Moghul and British periods in the context of the Marxist theory of historical materialism. Another study has attempted to explore the history of Indian urbanism.<sup>(17)</sup> It has been argued that urbanization had its roots in the Indian cultural setting from the earliest times. Three major types of cities emerged out as a consequence: (i) Cities in Post-colonial India; (ii) Capital cities; (iii) Non-Capital commercial/industrial centres and fortress cities. Urbanization during the period remained largely concentrated in the riverine zones, facilitating agriculture and agro-based trade.

During British rule, administrative centres took the leading role as towns and cities.<sup>(18)</sup> It has been observed that during colonial urbanization, there developed a communication gap between the town and the country both of them living apart from each other and urban influence did not filter much beyond its immediate environs into the areas of its administrative jurisdiction.

Most of the works mentioned so far illustrated more or less elaborately the twin process labeled by Redfield and Singer as 'Orthogenesis' and 'heterogenesis'<sup>(19)</sup>. While pre-colonial India

represents 'cities of the moral order', the colonial cities were the result of foreign intervention hence representing city of the technical order. The pre-colonial cities formed a core culture; while the colonial cities reflected secondary urbanization which takes place on account of people coming in contact with peoples of widely different cultures. The growth of cities in pre-colonial and colonial times, their interaction with the then politics, crafts, and techno-economic environment remain nearly a virgin field for social science research. Urbanization during this historical period can be treated both as an independent and a dependent variable and various political concepts developed by other social scientists can be consciously and rigorously applied by political scientists.

Recent theories unlike Childe's did not have a set theory that cities emerged without evolving from villages. New research under Flannery, 1972, 1976, Sanders and Price 1968, Service 1975, White House 1977 indicated that urban centers evolved under the influence of various combinations of social and cultural and diverse types of economic forces and the development of political and religious expansion. In 1938 Withe defined cities as conducive to specific behavioural patterns and moral attitudes, where the city and the country are regarded as two poles, in reference to one or another of which all human settlements tend to arrange them. Many of these analytical themes together with a search for the ideal city, universal or historically specific, can also be found in the works of historians

or philosophers of culture such as Oswald Speagler (1928) Lewis Mumford (1928, 1961) or Arnold Toynbee (1967).<sup>(20)</sup>

In those scholar's works the city is the focus of a distinctive moral order and of cultural creativity or decay -- a theme that was latent in the works of sociologists and as anthropologists became prominent, and different types of urban centers were often seen as epitomizing the spirit of whole civilizations, popularly known as urban trait analysis of cities. Criticisms again arose voiced by economists, historians, anthropologists against the ideal type distinction between urban centers and rural centers. It is maintained that the evolutionary approach, when applied to the study of urban centers in the Third World, has concentrated excessively on western influences especially the impact of industrialization and only cursory attention has been paid to indigenous features. To earmark all cities in a single 'Preindustrial' or 'Industrial' category meant regarding urban centers as artifacts rather than an integral larger society with a specific social structure, criteria for the allocation of political power social mobility or division of labour.<sup>(21)</sup> The hunt for the trait complex specific to the city and the evolutionary approach have also greatly influenced the study of urban centers Many works such as those of Bacon (1967), Lavedan (1926, 1941) Morvis (1972) Mumford (1961), and Vahle (1977) deal with various aspects of the internal structure of cities. Gutleiat's (1964 - 1972) monumental work on urban development and Boune's

(1982) comprehensive view of the modern city contributes to the field of urban studies. In principle several approaches can be distinguished in the study of the internal structure of cities.

The first approach that of urban ecology has been concerned mainly with the spatial distribution of population in the city and changes occurring in this distribution. The second closely related approach in terms of land distribution and utilization within the city has focused on analysis of the efficient urbanization of urban land. The last approach deals with the functional relation among the elements of urban design.<sup>(22)</sup>

In 1920s and 1930(s) the urban ecological approach emerged, establishing human ecology as the basis for analyzing urban centers. Biological ecology such as competition, invasion, and domination was believed to provide an essential sociological interpretation for urban growth. Various groups of urban population utilized their place of residence as a mean of staying near the people of their own socio-economic status or ethnic origin and of moving as far as possible from the groups with which they did not want to be associated. The entire process of change in the urban ecology thus depended to a large extent on the continuous flow of migrants into the city.<sup>(23)</sup> This human ecology approach was further developed by Hubert and Johnston 1978; Timms, 1971. With the development of research, it was found that the urban-ecological approach like the previous dichotomous and evolutionary approaches were too narrow

and rigid. In 1971 P. Wheatley in his works on ancient Chinese and Japanese cities analysed urban centres in terms of their religious or cosmological meaning.

In general, according to Wheatley ancient urban centres were an earthly representation of the cosmos. This symbolical approach however has been insufficient to provide a systematic analysis of the variety of material brought to sight by research especially in relation to broader societal settings. Urban centers is basically an interaction between large – scale political and social processes.<sup>(24)</sup> With further abundance of material, historians, sociologists, geographers and anthropologists have combined a strong evolutionary orientation in analyzing urban systems. An urban system consists of a number of towns and cities that are interrelated by common societal economic and cultural links. Each unit of an urban system is characterized by the size of its population, its types and magnitude of economic activities, and its level of political authority and cultural influence. A network of flows of people's money, commodities, regulations and ideas links the settlement within an urban system. The volumes and direction of the flows among the units of an urban system which are strongly related to the size of the political and economic levels of the various settlements making up the system. <sup>(25)</sup>

Another development of urban system was Christaller's 'central place theory' (1966 originally it was published in German in 1933) an extensive theory of functional and spatial organization of urban

structures that is concerned with size, shape and the areas served by these urban centers. According to this theory, a central place system is composed of several hierarchical levels of settlements, each level defined by the size and type of the centers and the variety of goods and services provided by them to their respective zones of service.<sup>(26)</sup> In societies in which the main function of urban settlements are commercial and administrative, central place theory is an useful mechanism of understanding the spatial distribution size and number of urban settlements and of the flow of resources among the central places themselves and between them and the rural areas related to them. In the original theory Christaller mentioned three organizing principles (1) marketing principle, (2) transportation principle and (3) administrative principle <sup>(27)</sup>

The ratio of the numbers of urban settlements between consecutive levels of the urban hierarchy varies in accordance with the organizing principle of the settlement system. The ratio is lowest in regions organized according to the marketing principle and highest in region organized according to the administrative principle. Central place systems based on the marketing principle depend on the effective pattern of location for efficient economic transactions. Urban centers evolving out of this theory usually get into a great deal of internal cohesion, stability and potential for survival. By contrast, central place systems based on administrative principle are established by degree. The central authorities define the

administrative centers, the boundaries of their service areas are clearly demarcated and the entire population living within these boundaries is compelled to receive services from the centre and to be under its control. For this reason, central place systems based on the administrative principle tend to be much better defined but much less stable than those based on the marketing principle and are subject to rapid changes in the wake of political upheavals.<sup>(28)</sup> G.K. Zipt (1949) M. Jefferson (1939) studied urban patterns in Thailand, Uruguay Denmark and Austria. Zipt related urban systems to a highly diversified yet integrated economic system. Jefferson's pattern was especially characteristic of colonial systems.

Gilbert Rozman undertook a more detailed examination. In the early stages of urban development the main force behind the evolution of the urban network was "administrative centralization".<sup>(29)</sup> Commerce played only a secondary role. In later stages of urban development however the major influence was the centralization of commercial activities which took place first through the appearance of markets removed from administrative centers then through the evolution of immediate marketing centers and finally of a complete commercial hierarchy. After researching a great deal of evidence from England, France, China, Japan and Russia, Rozman concluded that urban systems of these countries passed through a course of evolutionary societal development where the basic pattern of social change in premodern countries is directional, cumulative

and imminent within existing conditions. Thus the maturation of urban network marks the in-exorable course of social change. Rozman has related his findings to three basic processes centralization, commercialization and urbanization, which are again dependent on, local administrative centralization, central places and individual commercial participation.<sup>(30)</sup> Thus Rozman's analysis indicates several new dimensions of economic social and political factors which influence the structure and dynamics of urban systems.

In most classical approaches mentioned above the study of cities and the scope of their autonomy has been identified by many components then allowed for by previous approaches. But with the coming of the neo-evolutionary approach with Bisentad (1981) Curelaru (1976, 76) and above all the founding father Marx Amkheim (1964 and Weber (1951, 52) urbanization was not the expression of a process of 'modernization, but the manifestation of the level of sociospatial relations, of the accentuation of the social contradictions inherent in the mode of development determined by a specific dependence within the monopolistic capitalist system.<sup>(31)</sup>

The most distinctive feature of this study was the use of new conceptual and analytical tools to define the basic needs of any social system. A second spate of research on urbanization and the dynamics of urban systems was developed within a rather broad framework of Marxist approaches by Castells 1977, Castells and

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Godard 1978, Harvey 1973, 1978, 1982 Hanloe 1977 Lefebvre 1972, Peet 1977. Their studies emphasized variables as class struggle, class domination and international dependency as the major forces explaining the process of urbanization and structure of urban systems. Marx and Engel regarded the historic division between town and country as a process of urbanization being a condition necessary to the transition to socialism. The concentration of capital in the city, the polarization among the classes, and the appalling deprivation of the proletariat leading to the emergence and for mutation of class consciousness and revolutionary organization.<sup>(32)</sup> A different assessment of urbanization was made in the Neo Marxist writings mainly in the works of Castells (1977), Ianon (1965) Frank (1969) Hanvey (1982) and Marcuse (1964) where cities were viewed as an instrument of capitalist and imperial domination. In their function as centers of power of the regional national and international bourgeoisie. The growth of the cities is not to the accumulated samples of the honest toil of their citizens but to the labours of the rural, provincial and colonial masses. The development and wealth of urban centres depend on the effective exploitation of the material and human resources of their peripheries. <sup>(33)</sup>

An urban study in India within the framework of social science disciplines is just over six decades old. Interest in towns and cities was initially stimulated among Indian social scientists by Partick Geddes in the University of Bombay 1915, and the study of urban

problems was taken up by geographers and sociologists to some extent in the 1920(s). However substantive research on urban problems in India belongs to the Post - Independence period in all the social science disciplines. Significant contributions over the years have been made by town planners since early 1960(s).<sup>(34)</sup>

In their study Kenneth Ballhalchhet and John Harrison,<sup>(35)</sup> have drawn our attention to the need for historical studies of the development of urbanism in India. Their books has emphasized the importance of the role of politics in determining the location, growth and decline of Indian cities through history.

A political economic approach as prescribed by Safa<sup>(36)</sup> contemplates that the third world urbanization should focus on (i) the dependent nature of capitalist development in the third world which places far more emphasis on external economic forces in study of towns; (ii) changes which have occurred in the structure of towns as a result of the shift from pre-capitalist modes of production; (iii) the class structure of the towns, particularly the ways in which urban and rural poor subsidize the formal modern sector of the economy; and (iv) the role of the state in shaping the process of urbanization by lending support to the power of the elites and the formal modern sector.

The above mentioned studies mostly concentrate on historical, economic, political, morphological approaches to understand factors and forces, issues and events operating in the canvas of Urban India.

The major works done so far on urban issues for over the last few decades indicate the researchers concern mainly in five major aspects, namely historical, demographic, economic, sociological and political aspects indirectly if not directly. While some studies deal with the urban question at the national level others are comparative studies of a number of cities within India or across nations. Barring few, studies on Urban Hill Stations studies within India are nearly non-existent. Some of the major works are (i) Dane Kennedy – The Magic Mountains, Hill Stations and the British Raj; 1966; (ii) Jahar Sen, Darjeeling A Faroued Retreat – 1989 (iii) Fred Pinn, The Road of Destiny, Darjeeling letters; 1839, 1986 (iv) Buek Edward J, Simla Past and Present, 1904 (v) Weight Gillian, The Hill Station of India, Lincolnwood III: Passport Books, 1991; and such others.

While some of the ideas and concepts have found reflection in the research mentioned above, a study on urban history of Darjeeling through phases based on politico-economic approach will help to understand the society, economy and polity of Darjeeling Hill town. No such study has ever attempted by any scholar of history, economics, sociology or political science. The proposed study shall certainly be interdisciplinary in nature and multidimensional in content. The study proposes to understand some defined research questions, which have still remained unexplored. The positioning of town of Darjeeling with a distinctive British Colonial identity in the midst of an indigenous environment has never properly been

explored by any study of scholarship. Hill towns like Darjeeling used to be treated as continental climate congenial health resorts of the British and the indigenous elite people. Such a treatment belies the unique role of Darjeeling as one of the pivot points for the British strategic endeavor to perpetuate imperial power. Moreover, the social, economic and political role of Darjeeling in the region has been hardly explored.

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